

Teen Girls in a Culture of Seduction

Parenting Today's Teens

by Mark Gregston.

October 4, 2016

Teenagers today live in a world of seduction and permissiveness. Sexual images are everywhere, not just in an occasional movie or magazine. Younger than ever, they are being torn between living a lifestyle that is deemed acceptable and desirable by their peer group, and doing what has been taught them by their families and church. More times than not, the pressure to “fit in” with their culture wins out when they are away from home.

While teens do understand and welcome (most of the time) their parent’s “messages” about modesty and abstinence, the overwhelming influence of their peers and their culture will dwarf those positive messages. They are feeling a pressure to give in and “belong” that you wouldn’t wish on anyone. Easy access to pornography, the display of sexual images and themes across all forms of media, and the promotion of “alternative sexual lifestyles,” coupled with messages of instant gratification and a “do what you want” mentality, all set young girls up for a “fall.” By overexposure, they are being convinced that sex is as natural and healthy for them to participate in (before marriage) as breathing or eating, so it is simply no big deal.

If you learn your teenage girl has become sexually active, first try to understand those pressures and why it may be happening. Then, I encourage you to take a couple of “steps back” and don’t respond with your first inclination. Let things “sit” for a time. Gather your thoughts, think through what you want to say, and seek counsel from someone you trust. Just having someone else hear your thoughts and respond to your emotions with a sense of wit and wisdom is always helpful.

You will undoubtedly look at their sexual activity differently than they do. You’ll think of it as a loss of something, like their virginity, innocence, purity, or childhood. But your teen will feel that they’ve gained something, like experience, a stronger relationship, or coming into womanhood. The friction between your sense of loss and your teen’s sense of gain may cause so much heat that your relationship can go down in flames.

I’m not trying to justify your teen’s sinful actions, nor am I “buying into” this seductive culture, but I do know that if handled wrong, you can make your teen feel as though they are unforgivable, forever unclean, and “out of the club” because of their poor choice. It’s where we lose so many teens from our families, from our churches, and from our communities today. Shame on us, for shaming them.

Instead, maybe we should think about how God would approach it. God assures each one of us of His presence always. He doesn’t leave us when we make a mistake, nor does he turn His back on His children when they sin. He doesn’t disappear when the road gets dark, nor does He abandon us during a time of need. He moves toward us, in hopes of change, restoration, forgiveness, and reconciliation. I would encourage you to “Go thou and do likewise” when facing your teen who has fallen into sexual sin.

It does no good to shame the teen. Consequences for sinful and inappropriate behavior? You bet! Stronger boundaries or even a major change in the teen’s life to keep it from happening again? Absolutely! But not a demeaning presentation of judgment and shame. This type of approach only destroys your relationship, and builds walls of resentment. This is no time to be burning bridges. Your daughter needs you to help her understand that there is a better way. You’ll have no way to do that if the relationship is destroyed.

It’s easy to love a teen when they’re doing well. It’s harder to love them when they’re struggling and making mistakes. But it may be the time that they need it the most. We are never more like Christ than when we give our teen grace in the face of a struggle. And, giving grace when it surely is not deserved may change the direction of the struggle, or even bring it to an end.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Mark Gregston is an author, speaker, radio host, and the founder and director of Heartlight, a residential counseling center for struggling teens located in Longview, Texas.